


The signs are all around us: spotting signs of older adult abuse, neglect, and exploitation

Megan Schmidt
Training manager
Adult Protective Services



Learning objectives

Define abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Identify warning signs of possible abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Describe the steps to take if abuse or neglect is suspected.

Identify ways to engage, advocate, and empower.

**“The true measure of any society
can be found in how it treats its
most vulnerable members.”**

-Gandhi

Nationwide demographic shifts

The number of Americans ages 65 and older is projected to increase from 58 million in 2022 to 82 million by 2050 (a 47% increase).

Older adults are working longer. By 2022, 24% of men and about 15% of women ages 65 and older were in the labor force.

More older adults can meet their daily care needs. Older adults are functioning better on their own, and a shrinking share are living in nursing homes and assisted living settings than a decade ago. Home modifications and assistive devices such as walkers have helped older Americans maintain their independence.

Challenges seen in the demographic shift

Older Americans face a caregiving gap, especially those with lower incomes and dementia.

The number of Americans living with Alzheimer's disease could more than double by 2050. (from 6 million to 13 million!)

Demand for older adult care is expected to increase sharply.

**For the first time in U.S.
history, older adults are
projected to outnumber
children by 2034.**

What is older adult abuse?

Older adult abuse is defined as an intentional or knowing act, or failure to act, by a caregiver or another person, that causes harm or serious risk to a vulnerable adult.

1 in 10

Americans aged 60+ have experienced some form of older adult abuse. Up to 5 million older Americans are abused every year.



Adult Protective Services is the state agency with the responsibility and authority to investigate abuse, neglect, and exploitation involving vulnerable adults.

Vulnerable adult

Two categories:

- An older adult – defined as anyone age 65 or older.
- A dependent adult 18 years of age or older who has a mental and/or physical impairment that **substantially** affects that person's abilities.
(Defined on next slide).

Vulnerable adult

A dependent adult (18+) who has a mental or physical impairment which **substantially** affects that person's ability to:

1. Provide personal protection
2. Provide necessities such as food, shelter, clothing or, mental or other health care
3. Obtain services necessary for health, safety, or welfare
4. Carry out the activities of daily living
5. Manage the adult's own financial resources
6. Comprehend the nature and consequences of remaining in a situation of abuse, neglect, or exploitation

Types of older adult abuse



Physical abuse



Emotional abuse



Neglect



Financial exploitation

Physical abuse



- Physical assault – hitting, kicking, punching, biting, slapping
- Knowingly or intentionally done
- Attempting to cause harm, causing harm, or placing another in fear of harm

Emotional abuse



- Emotional or psychological abuse
- Knowing or intentional verbal or nonverbal conduct directed at a vulnerable adult
- Includes intimidation, threatening, isolating, coercing, or harassing
- Results in mental anguish, emotional distress, fear, humiliation, agitation of the vulnerable adult

Caretaker neglect



- Failure of a caretaker to provide nutrition, clothing, shelter, supervision, personal care, dental or other health care, or failure to provide protection from health and safety hazards or maltreatment
- Intentional failure by a caretaker to carry out a prescribed treatment plan that results, or could result, in physical injury or physical harm

Self-neglect



- Failure of a vulnerable adult to provide or obtain food, water, medication, health care, shelter, cooling, heating, safety, or other services necessary to maintain the vulnerable adult's well-being when that failure is the result of the adult's mental or physical impairment
- Choice of lifestyle or living arrangements may not, by themselves, be evidence of self-neglect

Financial exploitation



- Illegal or improper use of an older adult's funds, property or assets
- The most common form of elder abuse, but only a small fraction of incidents are reported
- Attractive targets: significant assets or home equity
- Older adults can be especially vulnerable due to: a cognitive decline, physical disability, health problems, recent loss of partner/family member/friend leading to loneliness and/or isolation.

Warning signs of older adult abuse



Physical abuse



Emotional abuse



Neglect



Financial exploitation

Warning signs of physical abuse



- An injury that is inconsistent with an explanation for its cause
- Cuts, puncture wounds, burns, bruises, welts, pressure marks
- Dismissive attitude or statement about injuries
- Forced isolation
- Inappropriate administration of medication, physical restraint

Warning signs of emotional abuse



- Fear, anxiety, agitation, withdrawal, depression, hesitant to talk openly
- Lack of interest in social contact, increased isolation from trusted individuals
- Unexplained or uncharacteristic changes in behavior
- Appearing frightened or shutting down when a family member/caregiver walks into the room

Warning signs of caretaker neglect



- Lack of basic hygiene, adequate food and water, or clean and appropriate clothing
- Dehydration or malnutrition without illness-related cause
- Lack of medical aids (glasses, walker, teeth, hearing aid, medications)
- Inappropriate administration of medication
- Soiled clothing or bed

Warning signs of self-neglect



- They have inadequate heating, plumbing, or their electrical service is disconnected.
- Their residence is extremely dirty, filled with garbage or animal feces, or very poorly maintained.
- They don't seek medical care or refuse needed medical care.
- They lack fresh food, possess only spoiled food, or are not eating.
- They show up to appointments in soiled, dirty clothing, and soiled briefs.

Warning signs of financial exploitation



- Missing personal possessions
- Unexplained withdrawal of funds from accounts
- Power of attorney being obtained after the person has ceased to have the mental capacity to make financial decisions
- The family or others show an unusual interest in the assets of the person.
- Recent changes in deeds or titles to a property
- Disparity between the person's living conditions and their financial resources

The sandwich generation is called that because they are “sandwiched” between 2 generations needing their support and care at the same time - their parents and their children.

Grandparents - Need financial support, help with daily tasks, and emotional support from their children.



Sandwich generation - Supporting both their aging parents and children in all aspects.



Children - Need emotional, physical, and financial support from their parents as they transition to early adulthood.

Sandwich generation

What is caregiver burnout?

A state of physical, emotional and mental exhaustion that can happen when you dedicate time and energy to manage the health and safety of someone else. Caregivers who experience burnout may feel tired, stressed, withdrawn, anxious and depressed.

What does caregiver burnout feel like?

Burnout feels like a candle that ran out of a wick — it doesn't have what it needs to continue to provide light. It can happen when you don't get the help you need personally, as you devote all of your time and energy to helping someone else.

How common is caregiver burnout?

Caregiver burnout is very common. Studies show that more than 60% of caregivers experience symptoms of burnout.

The signs and symptoms of caregiver burnout are similar to those of **stress** and **depression**. They include:

- Emotional and physical exhaustion
- Withdrawal from friends, family and other loved ones
- Loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Changes in appetite and/or weight
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Inability to concentrate
- Getting sick more often
- Irritability, frustration, or anger toward others

All these symptoms are factors that can lead to abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Caregiver burnout

Ways to engage, advocate and empower older adults

Education is the cornerstone of preventing older adult abuse.

top tips professionals should be providing to older adults in the community:

- Take care of your **health**.
- Attend **support groups** for spouses and learn about domestic violence services.
- Plan for your own future. Seek **independent advice from someone you trust** before signing any documents.
- Stay **active in the community** and connected with friends and family. This will decrease social isolation, which has been connected to older adult abuse.
- **Send and open your own mail.**
- **Do not give personal information over the phone.**
- Use **direct deposit** for all checks.
- Have your **own phone**.
- **Review your will** periodically.
- **Know your rights.** If you engage the services of a paid or family caregiver, you have the right to voice your preferences and concerns.

Resources in Utah

Visit daas.utah.gov/services or contact your local Area Agency on Aging.

- **Alternatives programs / Home and community based programs** – The Home and Community Based Alternatives Program is for low-income aging adults who need individualized in-home services that help them stay in their own home and maintain their independence.
- **Legal services** – legal clinics, pro bono clinics, low cost services, Utah Legal Services
- **Health, wellness, and nutrition programs** - offer healthy meals, social engagement, access to community resources, support independence and delay the onset of adverse health conditions. Programs promote healthy lifestyles plus support healthy behaviors for older adults.
- **Caregiver support** - This program serves unpaid caregivers of: older adults, persons with dementia of any age, persons with disabilities, and older adults caring for minor children. Provides access to resources and services, counseling, caregiver and dementia education, support groups, respite care, and assistive supplies. There is no low income requirement. For more information, contact the local Area Agency on Aging nearest you.
- **Medicare assistance (SHIP)** - The State Health Insurance Assistance Programs (SHIPs) provide local, in-depth, and objective insurance counseling and assistance to Medicare-eligible individuals, their families, and caregivers.
- **The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)** - a community service and work-based job training program for older Americans. Authorized by the Older Americans Act, the program provides training for low-income, unemployed seniors. Participants also have access to employment assistance through American Job Centers.

Eldercare Locator

Visit eldercare.acl.gov and search by city, state or zip code.



[Home](#) [About](#) [Resources](#)

1-800-677-1116 

Find help in your community by entering your zip code OR city and state.

Zip Code City/State

Enter zip code

Search



Welcome to the **Eldercare Locator**, a public service of the Administration for Community Living connecting you to services for older adults and their families. You can also reach us at [1-800-677-1116](tel:1-800-677-1116).

Have A Question?



Speak with an
Information Specialist
Monday - Friday
8am - 9pm ET

- [Start an Online Chat](#)
- [Call or text us at 1-800-677-1116](#)
- [Email Us](#)

Caregiver Corner



Visit our [Caregiver Corner](#) for information and resources for caregivers.

Find help in your community by entering your zip code OR city and state.

Zip Code

City/State

Enter zip code

Search

About

[Database](#)

[Outreach Materials](#)

[Contact Information](#)

[Aging Network](#)

[Eldercare Locator Data Reports](#)

Resources

[COVID-19](#)

[Long Term Care Planning](#)

[Feature](#)


[Consumer Publications](#)

[Helpful Links](#)

[Caregiver Corner](#)

[Learn More About](#)

Results for SALT LAKE CITY, UT

Welcome to the Search Results Page. Below is a listing of resources in your community that provide information and assistance for older adults and caregivers. To learn more about each type of agency access the  button located next to each service.

Show All

Information and Assistance

Salt Lake County Aging & Adult Services

Address : 2001 South State Street

51-600

City : Salt Lake City

State : UT

Zip : 84190

County : Salt Lake

Website : <http://www.slco.org/aging>

Contact Email : slcoagingservices@slco.org

Office Phone : 385-468-3200

Information Phone : 385-468-3200

State Phone : 877-424-4640

Languages : English,Spanish

Description : We provide services in compliance with the Older Americans Act which includes, NCW, AW, TAP (a State funded program for adults 18-59, Medicaid eligible), MOW, Rides for Wellness, FGP/SCP, Senior employment, RSVP, SHIP/SMP, Ombudsman, Elder Abuse, Legal Service referral. Our mission is: Promoting independence through advocacy, engagement and access to resources.

Hours : 8:00 am - 4:30 pm Mountain Time Monday to Friday

Directions : [View on map](#)

Reporting older adult abuse in Utah

Mandatory reporting in Utah

Utah has a **mandatory reporting law**.

UC §26B-6-205

Any person who has reason to believe that any vulnerable adult has been the subject of abuse, neglect, or exploitation **shall** immediately notify Adult Protective Services intake or the nearest law enforcement agency.

How to report to Adult Protective Services

To report abuse, neglect, or
exploitation of vulnerable adults
please call:

By telephone, Monday-Friday
8 a.m.-5 p.m.

1-800-371-7897

Report online 24/7
daas.utah.gov

Serves as a link between the national Administration on Aging and local programs, Area Agencies on Aging

Report Abuse / Neglect / Financial Exploitation

Reporting elder abuse in Utah is mandatory. You can describe the current situation of Physical Abuse, Emotional Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation, or Self Neglect.

Please call 911 if there is an emergency

Report online 24/7 using our online form or report by telephone, M-F 8:00 am - 5:00 pm at 1-800-371-7897

[Report Abuse Online](#)



Protection

Adult Protective Services
Financial Exploitation
Long-Term Care Ombudsman



Services

Alternative Program/ Home and Community Based Services
Caregiver Support
Health, Wellness and Nutrition Programs

What do I need to share with Adult Protective Services?

- The vulnerable adults name, date of birth, how they are vulnerable (age or a mental or physical impairment), living situation, contact information, safety concerns for the investigator going out (dogs, weapons, environmental concerns)
- The alleged perpetrators name, age, living situation, contact info, what the allegation is
- Collateral information – family, providers, supports, anyone who may know about the allegation and can aid in the investigation.
- Your information as the referent. Your information and connection to the report is kept confidential.

Thank you!